A DISCOURSE

PREACHED BEFORE THE

CORPS

OF

HAMPSHIRE FAWLEY VOLUNTEERS,

AT THE CHURCH OF

ST. THOMAS,

IN THE

CITY OF WINCHESTER,

ON SUNDAY, MARCH 19, 1797;

BY

GEORGE ISAAC HUNTINGFORD, D.D.

WARDEN OF

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BRITISH MUSEUM

TO THE

CORPS

OF

HAMPSHIRE FAWLEY VOLUNTEERS,

THIS

DISCOURSE,

PREACHED AT THEIR DESIRE,

AND

PUBLISHED BY THEIR REQUEST,

IS DEDICATED,

BY THEIR RESPECTFUL

AND OBEDIENT SERVANT,

GEORGE ISAAC HUNTINGFORD.

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*** A Second Volume is in the Press, and will be published soon.

A

DISCOURSE,

&c.

NEHEMIAH iv, 14.

Remember the Lord, which is great and terrible; and fight for your brethren; your ſons, and your daughters; your wives and your houſes.

SUCH was the exhortation of an admirable governor, diſtinguiſhed alike for his piety and public virtue. The efforts of his countrymen to rebuild their city were impeded by apprehenſions of danger from combined enemies; but he encourages his people to perſevere in their work, by recalling to their minds the attributes of God, and by ſetting before them the deareſt objects of their warmeſt affections.

At a ſeaſon, which, in maintenance of our religious and civil bleſſings, demands the utmoſt ex-

ertion of our ſeveral abilities, and which calls forth the ſpirit and activity, the honour and patriotiſm, of YOU the generous CORPS in this place aſſembled; at ſuch a ſeaſon we cannot have for our ſerious reflection any ſubject more proper, than if we follow the general ſentiments of this ſcriptural admonition; and deeply imprint on our memories the conceptions we form of the Supreme Being, and the comforts we derive from our ſocial condition. The remarks therefore now to be offered will be ſuch as may apply themſelves to the double capacity in which we all ſtand, as rational agents created by God, and as members united in the ſame community.

When we look to the heavens above, the earth beneath, and the maſs of waters which encompaſs the globe, we are ſtruck with aſtoniſhment at the variety and grandeur which theſe ſeveral parts of the univerſe exhibit; and we are filled with admiration at the order and harmony in which they are preſerved. Hence we are convinced, beyond poſſibility of doubt, that they muſt have been created, and are ſtill ſuſtained, by the power and wiſdom of ſome inviſible mind; that mind, which we attribute to God!

When we look upon ourſelves, and conſider the faculties with which we are endued; when we reflect on the manner in which we are formed

to derive ſuſtenance and convenience from the different works of creation; from the light and ſhowers of heaven; from the fertility of the earth; from the inhabitants of the waters; from the fowls of the air; from the beaſts of the field; from almoſt every object, animate or inanimate, which can preſent itſelf to the ſight of man; when we reflect on theſe bleſſings, we are perſuaded that the Creator, who made man capable of enjoying ſo many advantages, to an extent not experienced by any other living creature upon the face of the globe; and who furniſhed in all his works ſuch means of enjoyment to mankind; muſt be a God of unbounded goodneſs and benevolence to the human race.

That he, who receives a favour, ſhould expreſs his thankfulneſs for it, is the common principle of gratitude. The beſt and wiſeſt men of all ages and countries have acknowledged the truth of this principle, and have been moved by it to ſhew forth their thankfulneſs to God by ſome form of religious worſhip.

We have in our hands the doctrines of an Inſtructor, who with conſummate wiſdom hath taught us the proper form, in which religious worſhip is to be exerciſed. God is a Spirit, and therefore is to be worſhipped in ſpirit and in truth. The heart and underſtanding are to con-

ceive ſentiments of gratitude, and the tongue is to utter with ſincerity ſuch terms of adoration as are fit to be expreſſed by rational and devout beings, who unfeignedly would thank and praiſe their greateſt benefactor. After this manner it was the choice of our anceſtors, it is our own choice, to worſhip God.

It is no ſmall recommendation of the religious precepts delivered by this divine Inſtructor, that with the love of God he intimately connects regard for man. He makes it a duty inſeparable from true piety, that man ſhould exerciſe benevolence towards man. Hence he ordains, that we ſhould honour our natural and civil parents; ſhould check the very firſt emotions of anger, which, if indulged, might lead to acts of violence; ſhould abſtain from groſs vices, which defile wedlock, and reject every thought of irregular appetite; ſhould injure no man in his property; ſhould defame no man; ſhould take away neither his character nor his happineſs, nor his life, by falſehood; ſhould conceive no ſecret diſcontent, nor lurking envy, at another's proſperity; ſhould think and do nothing to another which we ourſelves ſhould diſlike, if others did the ſame to us. Theſe are rules ſo conſiſtent with all the concluſions of right reaſon, and ſo formed to preſerve the order, the perſons, the virtue, the poſſeſſions, the good name, and the friendly intercourſe of

man-

mankind, that the ſyſtem of chriſtianity which inculcates theſe rules, our anceſtors choſe to embrace; and we, of our own choice, continue to hold faſt a ſyſtem of moral duties ſo excellent, becauſe ſo uſeful and beneficial to human nature.

As we live in ſociety, we all of us ſtand in ſome relative ſituation. We are either parents or maſters, or friends, on the one hand; or we are children, or ſervants, or connected by ties of conſanguinity and affection on the other. From the diſcharge of thoſe duties, which on each are incumbent, according to the particular ſituation in which he is placed, ariſes a bond of union which nothing ſeparates but the hour of death. That continual interchange of benign looks, of complacent words, of ſtudious attention, or kind offices, of unremitting ſolicitude, which ſubſiſts between the ſeveral members of a family, endears each to the other with love indiſſoluble: and, in proportion as the ſame means of acquiring eſteem are extended beyond our families, degrees of ſincere regard and inviolable attachment are the uſual returns. Theſe are called the tender charities of life; charities of a nature ſo amiable in themſelves, and of force ſo powerful, in coming home to the boſom of every perſon well-diſpoſed, that from them flow the ſweeteſt comforts of human life.

The property which we poſſeſs hath either been delivered down to us from our foreſathers, who acquired it by meritorious ſervices and active exertions, or it hath been gained by ourſelves, as a compenſation of our induſtry, and a reward for the uſeful application of our talents. Whether our property be much or little, and whether it comes to us by inheritance, or by our own labour, that which every perſon has lawfully gotten, is equally his own, and ought to be deemed equally ſacred. And happily for perſons of every deſcription, and of every order in our own country, this is the undiſputed maxim of our law. He that hath his ſmaller dwelling, his more ſcanty ſupply of furniture, his more ſpare proviſions, his more contracted ſpot of land; that man is equally to be protected in his allotment as the man who is more wealthy. To this principle every juſt man readily agrees; and for this reaſon, viz. becauſe the dwelling, the furniture, the proviſions, the land, of the poorer man are his own; and, being his own, cannot without injuſtice be taken from him. The reaſoning is right, as the principle is right, and all honeſt minds acknowledge it to be ſo, and are anxious to have it obſerved in univerſal practice.

But it is here neceſſary to remark, that there are perſons who are ſo miſtaken as to confine this principle and reaſoning to their own order only; whereas in common ſenſe, and common

honeſty, they are bound, indiſpenſably bound, to extend the ſame principle and reaſoning to men of all orders, all ranks, and all deſcriptions. If the poorer perſon is to be protected in his property, becauſe it is his own, the richer perſon is alſo to be protected for the ſame reaſon. If it is unlawful and unjuſt for the richer man to injure the property of the poorer, it muſt be equally unlawful and unjuſt for the poorer man to injure the property of the more rich. For, to both alike, his property is his own; and, being his own, to both alike it ſhould be ſecured as ſacred. This is but common honeſty.

It might, moreover, not be improper to remind the ſame perſons, that not only conſiderations of common honeſty, but many reaſons alſo of prudence and ſelf-intereſt, ſhould induce the poorer to defend the rich. The rich find employment for the poor, in works of art, in purſuits of commerce, in labours of induſtry. The conſequence of this employment is, that the poorer man gains money with which to purchaſe neceſſaries, and ſees neceſſaries ready for him to purchaſe; whereas, if the rich were injured in their property, there would, firſt, be an end of employment for the poor; then would follow univerſal beggary; and the effect of general idleneſs, and general diſtreſs, muſt be a want of ſupply in articles neceſſary for food and raiment.

Let the ſame perſons alſo not forget, that the rich are the patrons who liberally contribute to the encouragement of all inſtitutions uſeful to the public, and who charitably ſupport the numberleſs buildings where proviſion is prepared for the needy, and relief for the ſick. But if the rich were injured in their property, all the ſupplies that are given to thoſe in want; all the ſupplies that maintain houſes in which the young and the aged find ſuſtenance; all the ſupplies that procure the comforts and remedies, the ſkill and attention beſtowed on the infirm in hoſpitals; all theſe advantages, which the poorer order now derive from the more wealthy, would at once periſh. It is, then, not only for the ſake of doing right, but it is moſt eſſentially and moſt deeply for their own intereſt, that the poorer ſort ſhould be anxious to defend the rich, as the rich are zealous to protect them.

We have among us different ranks in ſociety. No ſociety of large extent can peaceably exiſt without due ſubordination. Subordination requires, as the term implies, diſtinctions of place and of authority. Thoſe diſtinctions muſt be multiplied in proportion to the number of members who compoſe a ſociety, or the ſubordination will not be duly preſerved. The perſons appointed to ſuch diſtinctions, are either men who by right of inheritance claim privileges derived from their anceſtors, or men poſſeſſed of that property which,

which, in the nature of things, muſt and will have weight in ſociety; or men, who for ſervices beſtowed on the public, either by martial enterprize or legal labours, or ingenious talents, or political ſuperintendance, are entitled to expect an honourable return from the people to whom they have devoted their lives and abilities. To the perſons who fill appointments of diſtinction, we affix certain titles, which, by long uſage, are known to imply comparative ſuperiority in the gradations of ſociety. What thoſe titles ſhould be, is matter only of local cuſtom and national expediency. If they do but convey thoſe ideas of diſtinction which, according to our commonly received notions they are intended and are allowed to convey, it can be of no conſequence what the terms and appellations in themſelves are; and all that has been ſaid againſt ſuch terms and appellations, is but frivolous diſputing about words. The ſubſtance is what every prudent man conſiders. The ſubſtance implied by titles is diſtinction, and the deſign of diſtinction is to promote order, without which ſociety cannot be preſerved.

We have in this country laws the moſt equitable and the moſt humane. We may challenge the world to ſhew us a people, among whom juſtice to high and low, to rich and poor, is without diſtinction more impartially adminiſtered; where property, freedom, and life, are more

firmly

firmly inſured to every individual; or where puniſhments for violation of law are more mildly adjudged, and compaſſionately executed.

We have, for the preſervation of all other bleſſings, and for the general ſupport of public good, a glorious conſtitution; a conſtitution ſo formed as that popular ardour, deliberate judgment, and ſpeedy execution, are at once combined in it. If from our conſtitution were taken away either the active principles of the Commons, or the more ſedate conſideration of the Lords, or the prompt diſpatch of the Crown; if there were taken away the vigour of one body, the moderate check reſulting from the other, and the preſcribed power of ſtopping the intemperate endeavours either of faction or of ambition, a power reſiding, though under due limitation, in a third part; if either of theſe component branches were taken away, our conſtitution would loſe that degree of perfection, which not only in ſpeculation might be conceived, but which in practice and experience (the only true teſt of excellence) is actually found to exiſt in it.

Thus, then, for your conſideration, have been briefly enumerated the circumſtances which contribute to the happineſs of us all as men, and as Engliſhmen! Let me now place them in a point of view which may particularly engage your attention.

Be it then remembered, that the religion after which we worſhip God is our poſſeſſion.* The goſpel, which teaches us ſuch excellent precepts, is our poſſeſſion; our families, of whatever members they may conſiſt, are our poſſeſſions; the comforts derived from them are our poſſeſſions; our food, our raiment, our houſes, our lands, our property of all kinds, are our poſſeſſions; the arrangement of ranks, which prevails among us, is our poſſeſſion; our laws, our conſtitution, and the country we inhabit, are our poſſeſſions. All theſe things are either by choice, or connection, or inheritance, or induſtry, or appointment, or birth; our poſſeſſions, our juſt and lawful poſſeſſions.

What power upon earth, then, can claim to itſelf the right to diſpoſſeſs us of theſe precious, theſe ineſtimable bleſſing? None. Our own they are; and, by the favour of God on all who take arms in defence of every thing that can make life deſirable, our own they will continue to be!

Yet, in theſe, and all our poſſeſſions, we are more than threatened by enemies who have

* Religion, as a matter of poſſeſſion, may be conſidered in the nature of a civil right; and in this point of view, like all other civil rights, in the poſſeſſion of which we are not to be diſturbed, may be among the objects certainly of a *defenſive*, though not of an *offenſive*, war.

already

already inſulted our coaſts; enemies, too, of the moſt abhorred deſcription. But let not this expreſſion be miſunderſtood, as involving in a ſentence of general reprobation all the inhabitants of the country with which we are contending. God forbid! Doubtleſs there are millions who execrate the meaſures of the prevailing faction, from whoſe hands they have drunk the cup of miſery to the very loweſt dregs. If it were poſſible for us to give them proofs of it, they would claim our utmoſt compaſſion. It is not on them, but it is on thoſe who have diſturbed the peace of all Europe, that we caſt this reproach. And juſtly ſo; for in their daring impiety they blaſpheme the name of God; in their blind and brutal ignorance they deſpiſe the religion of Chriſt. To violate innocence; to plunder property; to confound all ranks; to aboliſh our laws; to ſubvert our conſtitution; firſt to deſolate, and then ſubjugate, our country as a province dependent on their own nation; theſe are the purpoſes for which our enemies would come againſt us: theſe are the purpoſes for which they would bring into the boſom of our country all the horrors of war. The ruinous degradation of Britain is the object they moſt earneſtly deſire to accompliſh. If, then, they perſiſt in their endeavours to effect our overthrow, we can have no other choice, than either with cowardly and wicked ſubmiſſion to ſurrender our poſſeſſions, or to be in readineſs for the protection of our religious and civil

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bleſſings. That they will *not* perſiſt in their enormous project of havoc and conqueſt, we cannot foreſee: in prudence, therefore, the latter alternative is the better part. And of alacrity in making preparations neceſſary at this important criſis, you have given an example which merits the applauſe and gratitude of your country.

Nor in this inſtance only have you ſhewn yourſelves a pattern worthy of imitation. By this your attendance on divine ſervice at an early period of your military operations, with ſound judgment and manly piety (I repeat the words), with ſound judgment and manly piety, you teach us all to direct our attention, and raiſe our minds unto God, as the Almighty Being who alone can determine the event of battle. To him, then, may we all lift up our hearts, and encourage a diſpoſition both in ourſelves and others, firſt to obey his precepts, and then to rely on his ſupport.

We of this nation have ſingular cauſe for reliance on the goodneſs and aid of Divine Providence. Let us "conſider what great things God "has done for us;"* what deliverances he hath wrought for this country. In former ages, a Spaniſh armament was ſent againſt our forefathers, prepared with every inſtrument of tor-

* 1 Sam. xii. 24.

ture which the ingenious cruelty of bitter perſecution could in thoſe days invent: Divine Providence diſperſed this armament, and brought the counſels of its authors to nought. It is within the remembrance of many here preſent, that the united fleets of France and Spain approached our coaſts: peſtilential ſickneſs diſabled and deſtroyed their force. But why recur we to years elapſed? Only ſome few weeks are yet gone, ſince, at God's word, the wind and ſtorm, fulfilling his commands, diſpelled a hoſt of enemies from a neighbouring kingdom; a kingdom with the ſafety of which are inſeparably connected our own proſperity, our own glory, our own independence! Still nearer to us is another event, in its ſeaſon providential, in its conſequences momentous; the ſignal victory which, by the bleſſing of God, our gallant navy gained over an enemy perfidious and diſhonourable; an enemy that was not ſatisfied with forfeiting alliance, but which, without any plea of adequate provocation, is actively aſſiſting an oppreſſive nation, that graſps at dominion over the whole of Europe.

Thanks be to God! who thus defeated the hoſtile deſigns of our menacing adverſaries. May his powerful aid continue to ſupport all thoſe who ſtand forth to be our protectors! In this prayer let every heart, and every tongue, devoutly accord!

And

And now, having renewed our ſenſe of veneration towards that gracious Being who is the firſt author and original giver of the manifold bleſſings we enjoy; and having impreſſed on our minds the ineſtimable value of thoſe objects, which natural affection, ties of friendſhip, rational prudence, love of freedom, Britiſh character, excite us to guard; let us go hence; YOU, to fulfil the ſcriptural exhortation, perhaps literally; and we, to obſerve it, each according to his reſpective ability, in its wider meaning. YOU, with your arms, will be zealous to encounter the greater peril, and thus heighten the eſteem with which you are now regarded: we, with any ſervices for which we are qualified, will be no leſs zealous to co-operate with your endeavours, and to expreſs our ſentiments of obligation to you. YOU by military, and we by civil duties, will all conduce with heart and hand to preſerve our religion, our families, our property, our order, our laws, our conſtitution, our country; to preſerve theſe bleſſings, which are by right our indefeaſible poſſeſſions: and in the ſpirit and language of him, who bade the Jews "remember the Lord, and fight for their brethren, their ſons, their daughters, their wives, and their houſes," let each of us conceive this ſupplication: "Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people;"* nor for this people only, but for

* Nehem. v. 19.

others alſo, who, though locally diſtant, are yet, by attachment and affection, ſo united with us, that as alike we acknowledge the ſame ſovereign, ſo alike we have but one and the ſame cauſe, in ſtruggling to keep ourſelves unconquered by any foreign enemies, and independent of any foreign dominion. That our mutual efforts, in a conteſt ſo great and intereſting, may, through Divine protection, avert the danger now impending, God of his mercy grant!

FINIS.

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